



HÖGSKOLAN
DALARNA

Directives for Dalarna University's Council for Sustainable Development

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Background

Recent years have been marked by a steady increase in the exchange of information, technology, products, and investments between countries. Such development has contributed to an increase in material welfare, better health, and the empowerment of billions of people throughout the world. Yet there is a downside to such progress. Currently, we are living at levels that the planet cannot sustain. Many important processes and functions in nature are, as a consequence, under threat: for example, the climate and large-scale ecosystems both on land and in the oceans. Furthermore, the distribution of benefits and rights is extremely unequal. Great economical divides exist both between countries and within countries, as well as between men and women. The current state of development is, in many respects, unsustainable.

Sustainable Development is a term that was introduced in the very early 1980s. It came to be known globally because of the UN report entitled *Our Common Future*, informally referred to as the Brundtland Report, which was published in 1987.

It defines sustainable development as being:

*... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*¹

The aim of this comprehensive description is to consolidate the UN's work in terms of the environment, human rights, peace, and the fight against poverty. This came to be made even more concrete with Agenda 2030, which was adopted by the member states of the UN in 2015 and which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With Agenda 2030 and the global goals, countries of the world have committed themselves to ending poverty and hunger; reducing inequality within and among countries; promoting peaceful and inclusive societies; protecting human rights; achieving equality and empowering women and girls; and working to protect the planet and its natural resources.²

Often, the term *sustainable development* is described in terms of three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic.

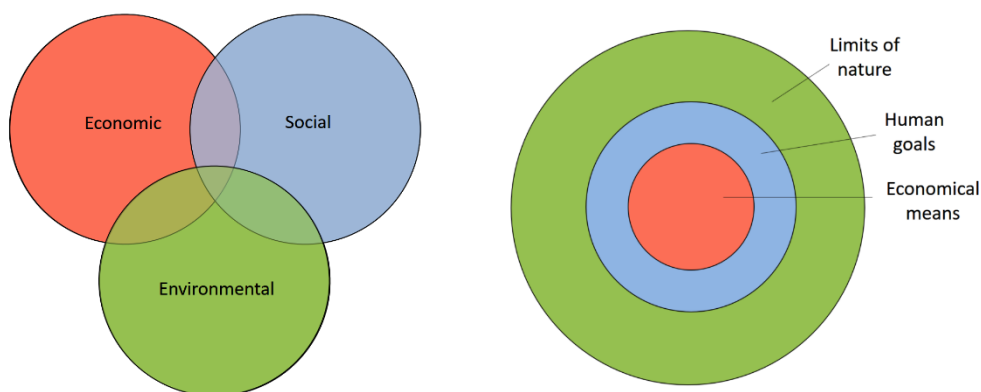


Figure 1. Two ways to illustrate sustainable development (see text below).

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future, Report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² <https://www.globalgoals.org/>

Environmental Sustainability refers to the ecosystem of Earth and the long-sighted retention of its biological diversity and functions: for example, the ability to produce food and energy, to provide clean water, and to regulate the climate. *Social Sustainability* refers to people's life factors and life quality, such as food, health, security, education, and power from the perspective of the individual, and the distribution of these rights between people. *Economic Sustainability* refers to how structures that regulate production, trade, and consumption shall be designed so as to promote the management of material and human resources. However, when it comes to economic sustainability, the interpretation of it is broad in terms of what can be considered, in practice, to be sustainable economic development.

A common way to look at environmental, social, and economic sustainability is to view them as three interactive goals with the same importance and value. Often, three circles are used to symbolise this (figure 1). An alternative way to illustrate the three dimensions is to consider that our societies are dependent on what nature produces. The outer circle, environmental sustainability, defines the framework. Within this we find social sustainability – that is to say, how we people are feeling and how our needs are met. The innermost circle symbolises economic sustainability, which comprises the rules of play that we human beings agree upon when it comes to how goods and services are to be exchanged. As such, people's goals and the means of the economy need to be in line with the limits of the planet.³

Sustainability at Dalarna University

In its operations, Dalarna University aims to live by both its own vision and the strategic focus areas, as well as the following provision as stated in The Swedish Higher Education Act (1992:1434):

In the course of their operations, higher education institutions shall promote sustainable development to assure for present and future generations a sound and healthy environment, economic and social welfare, and justice. (Chapter 1, Section 5)

Dalarna University takes as its point of departure the Brundtland Report definition of sustainable development (see above). The University will contribute to Agenda 30 and to creating what is required in its work towards meeting the global goals. This requires both education and research of high quality as well as solid collaboration with society at large.

For the University to promote sustainable development, it must address all three dimensions of sustainability: the environmental, the social, and the economic. For *environmental sustainability*, government authorities need to organise and integrate their environmental work in a systematic manner. This is regulated in the *Förordning (2009:907) om miljöledning i statliga myndigheter (Regulation (2009: 907) on Environmental Management in Government Authorities* – Unofficial Translation):

A government authority [...] shall, within the framework of its regular operations, have an environmental management system that integrates regard for the environment so that there is an awareness of its direct and indirect effect on the environment in a systematic manner. (Section 3 – Unofficial Translation)

³ See, for example, Bonnedahl, K.J. (2012). *Från ekonomiskt till hållbart, från exploatering till samexistens*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

The Swedish Higher Education Act (1992:1434) sets the requirements for *economic sustainability* in an organisation:

The operations of higher education institutions shall be arranged to ensure that high standards are attained in courses and study programmes and in research. The resources available shall be used effectively to sustain a high standard of operation. (Chapter 1, Section 4)

In the same clause, provisions are given that regulate *social sustainability*:

Equality between women and men shall always be taken into account and promoted in their operations of higher education institutions. Furthermore, in their operations, higher education institutions should promote understanding of other countries and of international circumstances. Higher education institutions shall also actively promote and widen recruitment to higher education. (Chapter 1, Section 5)

Dalarna University's clear position is that everybody shall have the same rights, the same responsibility, and the same opportunity to shape their lives. The Discrimination Act (2008:567) places demands on us as employer and educator to have ongoing, active measures in place to combat discrimination and to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, or age.

The promotion of understanding of international circumstances (see above, Swedish Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, Section 5) has increased in importance as the economies of countries and the knowledge they acquire become more closely linked. The global challenges that the world faces cannot be solved by countries individually; rather, good bilateral relationships and transborder collaboration in terms of research and innovation are required. Indeed, there are strong reasons for us as an institution of higher education to build on international collaboration and to increase internationalisation in our education and research. The following definition describes the position of the institution: "Internationalisation at Dalarna University means the incorporation of a global perspective, intercultural understanding and international collaboration and mobility into our education and research."

The Mission of the Council

The mission of Dalarna University's Council for Sustainable Development is to analyse, prepare, and evaluate Dalarna University's strategic work with sustainability. Of particular importance for the Council is its aim both to manage and to increase the visibility of potential synergies and conflicts between different objectives and intentions within the organisation. The assignment comprises the three dimensions of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This will mean, by way of example, the following for the Council:

- keeping abreast of national and international development that is relevant for sustainable development,
- contributing to the exchange of knowledge and experiences with and between different sections of the University, as well as with and between other institutions and external parties,

- assuming an advisory role for the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Council (*RBL*) as well as the Vice-Chancellor in the work towards integrating sustainable development in education, research, and collaboration,
- preparing regulatory documents that have a direct focus on sustainable development (for example, policies related to the environment, diversity, and equality), and functioning in a consultative role with regards to policy documents that are relevant to sustainable development,
- developing enquiries and other documentation required for decision-making with regards to questions that concern sustainable development,
- taking part in the work with the University's general planning, and following up on issues that concern sustainable development – in the long term in the form of visions and strategies and in the short term in the production of planning needs, the prioritisation of developmental efforts, and the follow-up on measures taken.

Structure of the Council

- Chairperson (selected by the Vice-Chancellor)
- Secretary (strategy officer for sustainable development)
- Student Representative (selected by the Student Union)
- Representative for central committees (selected by the Education and Research Board)
- Diversity Coordinator
- Internationalisation Coordinator
- Environmental Coordinator
- One Representative from each School (selected by each Head of School)
- Two Representatives for University Management, the University Library, and the Education and Research Office (selected in consultation with the Director of the University Library and the Director of Education and Research).

Those employees who are selected will sit as members for two years, after which time there will be a review. All members, apart from those who are student representatives, will have at least 5 percent of their employee hours allocated for this role. The extent of membership can periodically increase, depending on involvement in the working groups (see below). Additional individuals may be co-opted should the need arise.

Work Procedures of the Council

The Council will meet at least twice each semester. The Secretary of the Council will be in charge of coordination. The Chairperson, Secretary, and Student Representative will prepare council matters and set the agenda for meetings.

The Council will work to develop a planning directive (*VP-direktiv*) with focus on the priorities that are required in the promotion of sustainable development. The Council will also be involved in ongoing analysis of the University and an annual follow-up of measures that have been taken.

The Chairperson of the Council will report to and will receive work directives from the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Council (*RBL*). The Representatives from the Schools will report to and receive work directives from the management committees (*ledningsgrupp*) of each School.

Representatives from University Management report to FAC (*förvaltningens ledningsgrupp*), which assigns them their work duties.

Representatives from the Schools and University Management have a special responsibility in terms of the communication of the Council's priorities to colleagues and the obtaining of opinions and experiences from colleagues.

The Council works together in particular with the Director of Property and Facilities and environmental controllers to ensure that environmental awareness is integrated into the organisation. The Council works in particular with the Director of Human Resources to ensure that the social sustainability dimension is integrated into the organisation. As well, the Council works in particular with those who work with internationalisation in the Schools to ensure that an international perspective is integrated into the organisation and that international agreements and exchange programmes are charted and evaluated.

The Council has its regular meetings but can also meet in working groups that include both members of the Council and others. Such groups can be long-term or short-term, depending on needs. The working groups report to the Council, which determines their activities.